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SUBJECT: PAKISTAN MEDIA REACTION: DECEMBER 15, 2009

Summary: Matters concerning U.S. actions on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border dominated front pages this morning with wide coverage of General Petraeus' visit to Islamabad and views attributed to President Obama in separate interviews appearing both cautious about and supportive of drone attacks within Pakistani territory -- The Daily Times, citing a Newsweek report trumpets "Obama resisting drone attacks in Quetta." Dawn: "Obama refuses to rule out drone attacks in Quetta." The Nation: "U.S. to strike inside Pakistan on actionable intel: Obama." Headlines in most media alleged that General Petraeus heard calls from Pakistani leaders to end drone attacks. General Petraeus's statement that the U.S. respects Pakistan's sovereignty, his praise for Pakistan's military, and assurances on increased coordination on Afghan strategy received prominent display; but Admiral Mullen's concerns about collusion between Afghan and Pakistani militants rounded out coverage. In other matters, most media front-paged a statement in the Supreme Court by Counsel for the Federation (government lawyer) Kamal Azfar that the CIA and the Pakistan military (GHQ) are threatening Pakistan's democratic system. Feeding the fictitious narrative of clandestine U.S. activity in Pakistan, nearly every major English daily reported that the Lahore High Court Chief Justice ordered the GoP to take legal action against diplomats involved in illegal activities in Pakistan -- the comments were made while hearing a petition about the alleged presence and illegal activities of Blackwater and Dutch nationals in Pakistan. Reports also highlighted the Lahore High Court Chief Justice's decision to restrain federal and provincial authorities from deporting the alleged American Jihadis. End Summary.

TOP STORIES

News Story: Stop Drone Attacks, COAS Asks U.S. "The Nation" (12/15)

"... U.S. General David Petraeus again assured that new Afghan policy will not affect national interests of the country at any cost urging undoubtedly U.S. respects Pakistan's sovereignty and integrity. U.S. General David Petraeus on Monday met Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani at the GHQ.... The CENTCOM Chief said Pakistani forces are operating very well against militants in SWA, adding they (militants) are posing a significant threat to Pakistan. On the other hand, COAS Gen. Kayani again urged the U.S. to stop drone attacks because it is proving counterproductive and thus creating a negative impact on war against terrorism."

News Story: Pakistan, U.S. Discuss Operational Details Of Afghan Strategy "Dawn" (12/15)

"U.S. Central Command chief General David Petraeus said on Monday he had discussed with Prime Minister Yousuf Raza Gilani and Chief of the Army Staff General Ashfaq Parvez Kayani operational aspects of U.S. plans to send 30,000 additional troops to Afghanistan and reinforced his view that the civilian government in Pakistan did not face any threat. Talking to a group of journalists after meetings with the prime minister and the army chief, the visiting U.S. General declined to comment on speculations that the U.S. had plan to carry out drone attacks in Balochistan."

News Story: Petraeus Sees No Threat To Zardari From Kayani "The News" (12/15)

"General David Petraeus, head of U.S. CENTCOM, says that he is positive that the Pakistan military does not nurture any notion of destabilizing President Asif Ali Zardari or the present government in Islamabad. "I have seen no indication that General Ashfaq Kayani is entertaining such a notion. Whenever we have talked to them they say they are committed to democratically elected civilian government. Whenever any such topic is touched upon they say they are supportive of the government. When I testified before the Congress I was also asked whether the Pakistan military would take over and I said, 'No.'" (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News Story: Obama Resists Drone Strikes In Pakistan "The News" (12/15)

"U.S. media reports have revealed that President Barrack Obama, during situation room meetings at the White House to review the U.S. strategy on Pakistan and Afghanistan, did express concern over the idea of expanding drones attacks to Quetta and other urban centers of Pakistan. The White House has not confirmed or denied the report. The reports say that President Obama was of the view that widening the scope of the drone attacks to more Pakistani areas would be risky, unwise and draw strong reactions from Pakistani politicians and military leaders, who have been largely quiet about these attacks as long as they were confined to the remote Pak-Afghan border areas. A top U.S. official, told this correspondent on condition of anonymity, that top U.S. diplomats, including U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, Special U.S. representative for Pakistan and Afghanistan Ambassador Holbrooke and U.S. Ambassador to Pakistan Anne Paterson, were also of the view that the U.S. should be ready for a very strong reaction from Pakistan in case drones attacks were expanded to settled areas of Pakistan, including Quetta." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News Story: Obama Refuses To Rule Out Drone Attacks In Quetta "Dawn" (12/15)

"President Barack Obama has warned that the United States would launch strikes inside Pakistan if it had actionable intelligence about the presence of top Al Qaeda and Taliban leaders in a particular area. His statement - included in the transcript of an interview released on Monday - contradicts earlier U.S. media reports that President Obama opposed drone attacks at suspected Taliban targets in and around Quetta."

News Story: U.S. To Strike Inside Pakistan On Actionable Intel: Obama "The Nation" (12/15)

"Underscoring the militants' growing threat to Pakistan and the United States, U.S. President Barack Obama has said that his administration would not hesitate from striking inside Pakistan if it had actionable intelligence against top Al-Qaeda and Taliban leaders, Obama said on CBS '60 Minutes' program on Sunday night."

News Story: Al-Qaeda-Taliban Collusion Worries Mullen "The News" (12/15)

"America's top military officer on Monday expressed concern over the "growing level of collusion" between the Taliban insurgents in Afghanistan and al-Qaeda and other militant groups taking refuge across the border in Pakistan. Admiral Mike Mullen, who is in Kabul to discuss the upcoming U.S. troop buildup and training of Afghanistan's security force, told reporters he would discuss the issue with Pakistani authorities during talks in Islamabad later this week."

News Story: Azfar's Remarks Stun SC: Govt. Facing Threat From GHQ, CIA "Dawn" (12/15)

"The federal government's lawyer Kamal Azfar on Monday stunned the Supreme Court bench hearing challenges to the controversial NRO by saying that he alluded to the American CIA and the GHQ (General Headquarters) when he cautioned in the petition he had filed last week about threats that could derail the democratic system in Pakistan."

News Story: Court Orders Action Against Diplomats For Illegal Activities "The Nation" (12/15)

"Lahore High Court Chief Justice Khawaja Muhammad Sharif on Monday directed the government to take action against foreign diplomats if they were found involved in illegal activities in the country. The Chief Justice observed that the present courts were independent and would not allow violation of law in the country." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News Story: Govt. Barred From Extraditing Six Americans "Dawn" (12/15)

"Lahore High Court Chief Justice Khawaja Muhammad Sharif on Monday restrained federal and provincial authorities from handing over six American nationals, arrested from Sargodha, to America or any other country. The chief justice also directed Additional Advocate-General Faisal Zaman Khan to seek a reply from the home secretary by next date of hearing on December 17." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

TERRORISM/MILITARY ISSUES

News Story: Pakistan Cautions U.S. "Dawn," "The News" (12/15)
"Senior Pakistani official told Los Angeles Times if the U.S. went ahead with its plan to launch drone strikes in Quetta then it would be 'the end of the road' for the U.S.-Pakistan cooperation in the fight against extremist groups. 'We are not a banana republic,' said the official involved in discussions on security issues with the Obama administration."

News Story: Police Seize Luggage Of U.S. Nationals "The Nation" (12/15)

"The Preedy Police on Monday recovered the luggage of U.S. national terror suspects, arrested from Sargodha, over alleged links with terrorists here on Monday. The Preedy Police SHO said that a Police party raided a local hotel namely Al-Saddam on Shahra-e-Iraq and seized five bags, one cell-phone without SIM card and a book from a room where the U.S. citizens had stayed. He said that alleged terrorists reserved the room on November 30, and checked out from the hotel on December 1, without any prior notice to the administration."

News Story: No Threat From GHQ: PM Spokesman "The News" (12/15)

"The statement of Federation's counsel Kamal Azfar before the Supreme Court that the democratic system in Pakistan is under threat from Pakistan Army's GHQ and American CIA, has stunned the nation and put the government in a tight corner - almost an indefensible no-win situation. As the corridors of the Presidency are used to hear such mutterings often, the presidential spokesman gave a calculated response on Azfar's statement, the Prime Minister's office unambiguously distanced itself from this." (Story also covered in all newspapers)

News Story: Hillary Offers U.S. Help To Improve Pak Police Force "The News" (12/15)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has said that Pakistani police were under-resourced in fight against terrorists and America was ready to consider any request from the Government of Pakistan to help police force, while talking to Pakistani Scholar Dr. Hassan Abbas in Washington at the State Department, Secretary Clinton said."

News Story: Pakistan Rejects U.S. Demands For Crackdown On Haqqani Network "Daily Times" (12/15)

"The Pakistani military has rejected U.S. demands that Islamabad crack down on the strongest Taliban warrior in Afghanistan, Siraj Haqqani, whose fighters pose the biggest threat to American forces, Pakistani military officials and diplomats told the 'New York Times.'"

News Story: Zardari Hits Back At U.S. Criticism of Pakistan "The News" (12/15)

"... President Zardari has hit back at American criticism of his country's failure to catch terrorist leaders with an accusation that it was the U.S., which created Al Qaeda and Taliban. Zardari, writing in the New York Times, was reacting to criticism officials, including Defense Secretary Robert Gates and senior Military Chiefs."

News Story: U.S. Consulate's Vehicle Released "Dawn" (12/15)

"Police on Monday released after verification a Land Cruiser of the U.S. Consulate General which was impounded near Sherpao Bridge on Saturday for not having registration documents. SSP (Operations) Chaudhry Shafiq Ahmed told 'Dawn' that the vehicle had been released by the Sarwer Road police three days after officials of the U.S. embassy showed the registration documents."

News Story: U.S. Man Gets 17 Years For Supporting Terror "The Nation" (12/15)

"A Pakistan-born U.S. citizen was sentenced Monday to 17 years in prison for supporting terror groups by sending videos of U.S. landmarks abroad and plotting 'violent Jihad' in Europe. Ehsanul Islam Sadequee, 23, refused to stand when Judge William Duffey, a former U.S. attorney, asked him several times to stand for sentencing. Duffey had allowed to Sadequee 44 minutes in court to explain to the judge why a harsh sentence should not be imposed." News Story: Dr. Khan Provided Protocol Due To Security Concerns, Blackwater Presence "Daily Times" (12/15)

"The government provided foolproof security to Dr. Abdul Qadeer Khan considering the law and order situation, including the attack on the military's General Headquarters and reports of the presence of U.S. private security firm Blackwater in the country, the Interior Ministry's counsel submitted to the Lahore High Court on Monday."

News Story: 17 Taliban Killed In Army Action "Daily Times" (12/15)

"The security forces on Monday killed 17 Taliban in the ongoing military operations across the country. The forces killed five Taliban in Operation Rah-e-Nijat in South Waziristan, the Inter-Services Public Relations said."

News Story: Another School Blown Up In Khyber Agency "Dawn" (12/15)

"Militants blew up a government-run Girls Primary School in Khyber tribal region in the small hours of Monday, locals and political administration officials said."

POLITICAL

News Story: Clinton For Resumption Of Indo-Pak Talks On Kashmir - "Daily Times" (12/15)

"U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton has called for resumption of dialogue between Pakistan and India on all outstanding issues, including Kashmir, warning that terrorists would try to provoke a conflict between the two countries if the issues were not resolved, she said in an interview with a private TV channel."

ECONOMY/ENVIRONMENT

News Story: U.S. Approval Of \$1.56 Billion Under KLL Paves Way For 4th IMF Tranche "The News" (12/15)

"The Obama administration has finalised sectors for providing upcoming \$1.56 billion assistance to Pakistan under the Kerry Lugar Law (KLL) till September 30, 2010 under which Washington is going to

extend \$155.200 million for law enforcement agencies especially for police and \$298 million for foreign military financing, official document available with 'The News' reveals."

News Story: Pakistan Exposed To Impact Of Glacial Melting "Dawn" (12/15)

"The melting of the glaciers will have an adverse impact on the entire South Asian region, said Dr. Rajendra Pachauri, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, who came to a side event organized by Pakistan's Ministry of Environment and IUCN at the Climate Summit in Copenhagen on Monday. He termed the Indian ministry's recent reports of glaciers in the Himalayas being in a healthy state as incorrect, calling it 'voodoo science.'"

MISCELLANEOUS

News Story: U.S. Donates Search And Rescue Equipment "Daily Times" "Jang," "Express," "Mashriq," "Islam," "The News", "The Nation" (12/15)

"U.S. Consul General Candace Putnam delivered four search and rescue equipment kits to the NWFP Provincial Relief, Rehabilitation and Settlement Authority (PaRRSA) in a ceremony held on Monday. The equipment will help fire and rescue personnel to safely remove victims from disaster scenes, said a release."

Opinion: U.S. Visas, an op-ed by Hamid Akhtar in an editorial in the liberal Urdu daily "Express" (circ.25, 000) (12/15)

"People who applied for U.S. visas in the golden era after Pakistan's creation still remember nostalgically that when they received their U.S. visas, the Embassy would also send along a thank you letter. The letter said that 'we are grateful that you are planning to visit and see our country.' Obviously, due to such reasons, old people of my age still remember those times fondly. Whatever my [journalist] friends might say, despite all the new U.S. visa regulations and rules, I do not wish to blame the U.S. I feel that we only have ourselves to blame if other countries feel apprehensive about letting us [Pakistanis] into their countries. There was a time when Turkey allowed Pakistanis to visit without any visa. But we misused this facility to such an extent that the privilege was eventually withdrawn. Now we have Jihadis wishing to conquer the U.S.; so how can we expect the U.S. to open its doors to us? What I do not comprehend, though is how can terrorism be eliminated by looking at the centimeters between the applicant's eyes and chin [per the visa photo requirements]. The problem, however, is that we cannot seek an explanation from the U.S. From day one, we accepted it as our lord and master, and we also continue to receive dollars from it, so how can we even dare to ask for an answer from it."

EDITORIALS/OP-EDS

Editorial: U.S. Assistance To Pakistan And The Controversies, an editorial in the country's premier business newspaper, "Business Recorder" (cir. 25,000) (12/15)

"The 1.459 billion dollars of U.S. assistance to Pakistan must be viewed in the context of these well-known limitations to aid efficacy. In Pakistan's context, the element of domestic corruption is considered an additional element that would limit aid's quality of being able to bring about an effect; and this accounts for allocation of a significant amount of money under the Kerry-Lugar Act for audit by U.S. Agency for International Development - money that would not, obviously, be earmarked for direct poverty reduction projects. A part of U.S. assistance is also being diverted to provide further security to U.S. personnel stationed in Pakistan given the rise of terrorist attacks in the country. However, these expenditure items can no longer be negotiated and therefore are no longer available to the country for poverty reduction."

Editorial: Growing Suspicions Regarding Blackwater Activities In Pakistan, an editorial in the popular rightist Urdu-language daily "Ausaf" (cir. 10,000) (12/15)

"During the last few days, local media has repeatedly highlighted the dubious activities of American diplomats in various cities of

Pakistan. According to reports, these people, armed with sophisticated weapons, often refuse to allow the Pakistani security officials to search their vehicles and sometimes adopt derogatory attitude towards the law-enforcers. Such behavior is in stark contrast to the universally-recognized diplomatic norms and principles which may also result in a confrontation between the American diplomats and the Pakistani masses. We urge the government to take immediate and effective measures to check these illegal activities of the U.S. nationals in Pakistan."

Editorial: Peaceful Solution To Afghan Issue, an editorial in the Peshawar-based Urdu-language daily "Mashriq" (cir. 55,000) (12/15)

"The doubletalk of the U.S. officials about Pakistan's role in the war on terror serves nothing but create confusion and ambiguity regarding the American policies. Nonetheless, despite having complete knowledge about the foreign powers which support the terrorists, Pakistan has never blamed the U.S. or any other country. In fact, after suffering humiliating defeat in Afghanistan, Washington and its allies are laying all the blame at our door. We think that the Obama administration should pay heed to Gulbadeen Hikmatyar's advice and hand over Afghanistan to Afghans elected through free, fair and impartial elections."

Editorial: Terrorism: Pak-U.S. Strategy And India, an editorial in the Urdu daily 'Waqt' (circ. 5000) (12/15)

"Instead of directing Pakistan to do more, the U.S. leadership must lend all possible cooperation to Pakistan. Keeping in view its [American] defeat in Afghanistan, it should adopt the same strategy that the Pakistan Army has adopted. The U.S. and the western countries will gain nothing but humiliation if they want to win the war on terror through being pro-India."

Editorial: Indian War Preparations And Prerequisites Of Defending Our Country, an editorial in the second-largest, nationalist Urdu daily "Nawa-i-Waqt" (cir. 150,000) (12/15)

"Recently retired chief of the Indian Atomic Energy Commission Anil Kakud (sp?) said in a television interview that India has about 45-200 kiloton hydrogen bombs which are much more powerful than thermo-nuclear bombs. He also added that Indian nuclear weapons are safe and that the country must now focus on hydrogen bombs more.... Keeping in view Indian preparations, we must increase our defense capabilities. We must also find a response to its hydrogen bombs - as this is what national defense demands."

Opinion: Roots Of Terrorism, an op-ed by Shahid Javed Burki in the Karachi-based center-left independent national English daily "Dawn" (cir. 55,000) (12/15)

"By far the most important contributor to the rise of extremism was the way a series of administrations managed the Pakistani economy.... Islamabad should have focused not only in getting the economy to grow rapidly.... The result is that the country now has millions of alienated youth with little faith in their future. They have been successfully recruited to jihadist causes. The latest of these is the destruction of the Pakistani state. In developing an approach towards growing extremism and terrorism it is breeding, policymakers as well as the citizenry must first understand its complex causes. By focusing on just one aspect - the American pressure to go after the perpetrators of terrorist activities - the country will not be able to evolve a cogent response."

Opinion: The Menace Of The Infantile Left, an op-ed by Ishtiaq Ahmed in the Lahore-based liberal English language daily "Daily Times" (cir. 10,000) (12/15)

"A curious situation prevails currently in Pakistan. Both religious fascists and infantile Leftists are hell-bent on opposing the presence of the U.S. in Afghanistan. If the Americans were to leave today, the right and left 'historic United Front against Imperialism' will not last a day. So, what will happen in such a situation? The Taliban will return to power.... From a genuine leftist point of view, it is important that the forces of reaction and fascism are defeated, but that cannot be done now in Afghanistan without U.S. help as was also true during World War II in Germany."

Opinion: Obama's Afghan Policy; Pakistan's Perspective, an op-ed by Tariq Osman Hyder in the center-right national English daily "The Nation" (cir. 20,000) (12/15)

"Despite eight years of occupation, military intervention and developmental funding this year has been the worst in terms of the security situation for the Afghan people and the American, ISAF and NATO forces. General Stanley McChrystal has admitted this.... Obama's latest policy vision is still predominated by the military surge though couched in terms of protecting Afghans. The Afghan people developmental and political reconciliation surges do not yet carry the same weight.... Obama's new policy on Afghanistan is unlikely to succeed unless it is modified and implemented to bring all Afghans and Pakistan on board."

Opinion: The Fog Of War, an op-ed by Dr. Maleeha Lodhi in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/15)

"The announcement by President Barack Obama of his new strategy for Afghanistan has been followed by frenetic efforts of the Obama Administration to explain what this really means and defend it against domestic and international criticism. Because of the tension in a policy designed to convey varied messages to different audiences in order to placate both supporters and critics of an escalating war, the need for clarification became especially necessary.... Leaks are not policy. But the pattern of the leaks is much too familiar for Islamabad not to take urgent notice and undertake a careful evaluation of the risks ahead. The immediate danger - even before any planned escalation materializes - is that this coercive diplomacy-by-leaks can reinforce official and popular Pakistani suspicions about U.S. intentions, intensify public alienation from the West, and promote more anti-American rage. By contributing to such a toxic environment this strategy of leaks can badly backfire making it infinitely harder for the government (Pakistani) to cooperate 'fully' with the U.S., as President Obama is asking Islamabad to do. This should give the sources of these leaks much pause for thought."

Opinion: The Surge Might Scorch Us, an op-ed by Tasneem Noorani in the populist, often sensational national English daily "The News" (cir. 55,000) (12/15)

"President Obama has deliberated on his Afghan policy long and hard and finally decided that he want to leave Afghanistan. Now the 30,000 extra troops will raise the temperature in the war theatre and there is no way the heat will not affect Pakistan. As a matter of fact, I shudder to think of the impact the American surge will have on us, considering that just its announcement has resulted in mayhem all over the country. The Americans have been asking us to do more against the Taliban, who are shielding Al Qaeda. But now Mr. Karzai wants to talk to the Taliban; the Americans want their allies like the Saudis to open dialogue with the Taliban. So where does that leave Pakistan?"

(All circulation figures are based on estimation)
Patterson